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GENERAL DEBATE: EXAMINATION OF THE WORLD SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO DRUG ABUSE, INCLUDING ILLICIT DEMAND, ILLICIT TRAFFICKING AND ILLICIT SUPPLY

Reports of subsidiary bodies

Addendum

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INTRODUCTION

1. The report of the thirtieth session of the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East, which was held at Damascus from 21 to 25 February 1994, is before the Commission in document E/CN.7/1994/CRP.5 in the working languages of the Meeting. The contents of chapters I and II of that report is herewith brought to the attention of the Commission as an addendum to the report of the subsidiary bodies contained in document E/CN.7/1994/10.

I. MATTERS BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS

2. The thirtieth session of the Subcommission on Illicit Drug Traffic and Related Matters in the Near and Middle East adopted the recommendations drawn up by its working groups and contained in paragraphs 24, 29, 32 and 35 in document E/CN.7/1994/CRP.5.

3. The Subcommission requested UNDCP to prepare a special, article-by-article questionnaire designed to assess the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988, in the region, to accompany the questionnaire on the implementation of the recommendations adopted at its current session.

4. The attention of the Commission is drawn to the position taken by the Subcommission against the legalization of the non-medical use of drugs. The members of the Subcommission expressed their concern regarding the debate in some countries in favour of relaxation of drug control measures leading to the decriminalization or legalization of drugs under international control. This would have a negative impact on worldwide drug control efforts, and particularly adversely affect the efforts of those Governments in the region which were currently incurring high costs in controlling illicit cultivation of the opium poppy.

II. CURRENT SITUATION AND RECENT TRENDS IN ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

5. Illicit drug traffic in all its ramifications, as well as drug abuse, were considered to constitute a grave threat to all the countries of the region. The region remained a major

producer and market for opiates and cannabis, and a growing illicit market for psychotropic substances, particularly fenetylline.

6. Many countries were vulnerable to transit traffic in illicit drugs because of their geographical position in relation to producer countries, located on or close to their borders, and consumer countries in Western Europe and North America. Some producer countries also suffered from transit traffic. Of particular concern was the increase in drug abuse resulting from the spillover of transit traffic, particularly of heroin.

7. A recent trend in the region was the increasing conversion of opium into morphine base in the illicit producing areas. The observer for ICPO/Interpol reported that in 1993 over 25 tonnes of morphine base were intercepted in Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and Turkey. In spite of the upsurge in illicit traffic in morphine base, traffic in heroin continued unabated in the region. It was observed that whereas prior to 1979 there was hardly any heroin seized in the region, nearly 10 tonnes were seized in 1993 in 12/countries, particularly in the Islamic Republic of Iran which seized 3.6/tonnes, Pakistan which seized 4 tonnes, and Turkey which seized 2.2/tonnes in that year. The region of the Subcommission accounted for nearly 80 per cent of seized heroin which was destined for Europe in 1993, and which had been mostly transported along the "Balkan route".

8. Comprehensive measures to address the illicit cultivation of the opium poppy had been initiated in several countries of the region. The Government of Lebanon, supported by the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic, had, since 1991, succeeded in the eradication of illicit narcotic crops in the Bekaa Valley. That had resulted in the reduction of the availability of cannabis resin and opiates in countries for which Lebanon had previously been a primary source. It was reported that UNDCP, in collaboration with other organizations, was in the process of implementing the first phase of an integrated area development programme to sustain the efforts of the Government of Lebanon. The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicated that despite the large seizures of opium, morphine and heroin made by the authorities in his country during 1993, no illicit poppy cultivation or heroin laboratory had been discovered in the Islamic Republic of Iran. That was due to the strict prohibition of poppy cultivation and control of the importation of precursors. Law enforcement authorities in Egypt had been successful in identifying and

eradicating large fields of illicit poppy cultivation in the Sinai. The representative of Turkey stated that his country continued to successfully prevent the diversion of narcotic drugs to the illicit market following the lifting of the ban on opium poppy cultivation. The representative of Pakistan, referring to the progressive reduction of illicit opium poppy cultivation in his country in recent years, stated that poor weather conditions during the current season would probably result in a further reduction of the illicit crop.

9. Cannabis (and its derivatives) continued to be one of the most abused drugs in the region of the Subcommission. Abuse was reported to be rampant and traffic widespread. Major seizures were made by India, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey. Some 40 tonnes of cannabis were seized in Turkey in 1993 and 19/tonnes in Lebanon. Almost 400 tonnes of cannabis were seized in Pakistan in 1992-1993, with two seizures of 45 and 50 tonnes reported already in 1994. Countermeasures enforced by the Government of Lebanon, with the support of the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic, had significantly reduced the availability of cannabis resin in that country.

10. Fenetylline, which was often found on the illicit market under the brand name "Captagon", continued to cause particular concern to drug law enforcement authorities in the Arabian Peninsula and States of the Persian Gulf. Important quantities, allegedly manufactured in Europe, were seized in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey. The observer for the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) indicated, however, that no diversion of fenetylline from licit sources had been detected since 1989, and that the Captagon tablets seized in the Near and Middle East originated from illicit manufacture in Bulgaria during the 1980s. During 1993, enforcement authorities in India seized nearly 14.5 tonnes of methaqualone destined for South Africa through East African countries as well as through Dubai and Paris.

11. Cocaine was seized in five countries of the region. Lebanon was seriously affected by the illicit traffic in cocaine from Brazil, Colombia and Panama: nearly 300 kilograms were seized in Beirut in 1993. South American nationals of Lebanese origin were actively involved in such traffic.

12. With regard to precursors and essential chemicals used in the illicit manufacture of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, it was indicated that acetic anhydride had been placed under control in India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Pakistan and Turkey. The observer for INCB indicated that,

with the exception of Pakistan, no major seizures had been made in 1993, and that the quantity and purity of heroin reaching Western Europe from South-West Asia pointed to the availability of acetic anhydride or acetylating agents in the areas of illicit production.

13. The growing links between terrorist organizations, arms trafficking, and drug trafficking organizations were highlighted. Drug-trafficking groups were often heavily armed, increasingly better structured, prone to use violence, and enjoyed considerable financial support.

14. Several countries of the region were striving to address drug abuse through measures dealing with the prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and social integration of drug abusers. Campaigns to raise public awareness of the dangers of illicit traffic and drug abuse had yielded positive results. Such measures to control drug abuse were complemented by new legislative provisions calling for more stringent penal sanctions for drug-trafficking offences.

15. Several representatives emphasized the paramount importance of regional and subregional cooperation in combating illicit drug trafficking, and referred to the positive results achieved through bilateral and regional agreements or other forms of cooperation. Reference was made to subregional arrangements under the aegis of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) in South-East Asia and in the region of the Subcommission involving Afghanistan, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Pakistan, with the objective of ensuring closer trans-border cooperation and joint implementation of drug control programmes.

16. Trafficking routes were constantly changing as drug traffickers adjusted to law enforcement initiatives and exploited new opportunities which had arisen in the wake of political changes in central Asia and eastern and central Europe. Central Asian States were increasingly used as routes for smuggling large quantities of opiates and cannabis resin from the Near and Middle East to Europe. The representative of Azerbaijan underlined the importance his Government attached to the conclusion of agreements between States of the region for the implementation of the Tehran Declaration, adopted by the Ministerial-level Conference at the twenty-ninth session of the Subcommission (E/CN.7/1993/CRP.5, annex I), and stated that his Government would be willing to host a meeting in the pursuit of that objective.

17. Several speakers referred to the modus operandi of drug traffickers and to measures taken by their Governments to counter them. The Meeting was informed of positive results obtained in joint operations involving armed forces. Better-structured and specialized drug law enforcement agencies had been established to ensure coordination between the various agencies, particularly in sharing intelligence and conducting operations against drug traffickers. Pakistan was commended for the efforts it had made to cooperate with other States in controlled delivery operations.

18. Mechanisms for inter-agency and interministerial coordination and committees to coordinate national efforts to combat drug abuse and illicit traffic had been established in several countries.

19. New legislation had been or was being adopted in the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and Yemen, with a view to complying with the provisions of the international drug control treaties and becoming parties to the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988.

20. Several representatives called for a strong stance against any possible legalization of the non-medical use of drugs. They indicated that their Governments were firmly opposed to the dismantling of the control regime by decriminalizing the use of controlled drugs, as that would constitute a threat to the fabric of society in their countries.

21. The members of the Subcommission expressed their concern regarding the debate in some countries in favour of relaxation of drug control measures leading to the decriminalization or legalization of drugs under international control. This would have a negative impact on worldwide drug control efforts, and particularly adversely affect the efforts of those Governments in the region which were currently incurring high costs in controlling illicit cultivation of the opium poppy.